

Student Action with Farmworkers (SAF)

Lessons Learned

- Before the program began, SAF was unsure of how the material would be received for the farmworkers. In addition, they were apprehensive of how farmworkers would conduct themselves around female presenters when discussing sexual health. However, their initial apprehension was unnecessary. The farmworkers were extremely respectful and cooperative during programs.
- SAF found that Latino interviewees were less comfortable speaking about sex, sexual health, and sexual practices. It was perceived as a “taboo” subject. Farmworkers were shy and uncomfortable discussing these subjects publicly. Farmworkers were hesitant to discuss their personal sexual practice in a public forum; especially in front of their friends/coworkers.
- Very important to establish trust in the programs. If the farmworkers perceived judgment or didn’t feel comfortable they were even less likely to discuss sexual practices.
- Many myths exist about sexual health in this population. Important to address these myths during programming to garner a better understanding of the material for the farmworkers covered by the presenters.
- A large portion of farmworkers didn’t know how to use a condom.

Success

- Reached a large population of farmworkers
- Provided sexual health and safe sexual practice information to an underserved, hard to reach population
- Provided some HIV testing to attendees
- Made a connection and established rapport with a difficult population to discuss sensitive/taboo subjects
- Discussed prostitution and sex workers and how it relates to this population (unprotected sexual intercourse)

Best Practices

- Important to keep skits/information light-hearted. The farmworkers responded well to “telenovella” skits which blended humor and serious information. The combination of educational and comedy skits created a friendly and warm environment to discuss and learn about difficult/uncomfortable subject matters.
- The use of icebreakers was crucial. Helped the presenters have a better idea of their audience; and conversely, provided the farmworkers with more information about the presenters. Eased the discomfort of farmworkers.
- Individuals from both farm-working and Latino backgrounds were the best presenters. Farmworkers respond to people they relate to. In addition, when speaking to mostly Mexican farmworkers, try to find someone from Mexico to speak with them about sexual health. Someone from a farm-working and Mexican background is more relatable to this population.
- Important to normalize sexual health. Presenters must demonstrate the need and importance of safe sexual practices. When farmworkers understand their health and safety are in jeopardy, they are more likely to take something away from the presentations.
- Using props and pictures is helpful for demonstrations to better understand STIs and other communicable disease. Pictures provide a vivid impression of the consequences not practicing safe sex.
- Make sure all literature provided to the audience is in Spanish. Also ensure there is someone to read the brochures and other literature to those who may be illiterate.